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United States Department of State

Bureau of Intelligence and Research

SPOT Intelligence Report

(As of 0900 EDT October 15, 1987)

PERSIAN GULF: FOURTH TIME LUCKY FOR IRANIAN SILKWORMS AT KUWAIT

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The US-owned, Liberian-flag tanker "Sungari" (275,000 DWT) was hit at anchor 8 miles off Kuwait's al-Ahmadi oil terminal at 5:00 a.m. local time October 15, by an Iranian Silkworm missile.

Witnesses report the missile exploded inside the vessel, setting it afire from stem to stern. The fire was extinguished within four hours. Two crewmen are missing. The missile left a 4m x 3m hole in the ship's side. The "Sungari" was partially loaded with oil.

Four reflagged US tankers were nearby, the closest two miles away. No US Navy warships were in the vicinity. Three of the tankers have been moved farther south, and the fourth will be moved when it finishes loading.

As in three earlier Silkworm attacks on Kuwaiti territory early in September, this missile was most likely fired at near its extreme range from a site on the occupied al-Faw peninsula. A missile fired September 4 passed over the al-Ahmadi anchorage, but on that occasion apparently did not acquire a ship on its terminal guidance radar.

In recent days, Iraqi B6D Badger-copy bombers have fired air-launched Silkworms at a number of Iranian tankers. Fragmentary information indicates that these also caused damage and large fires exceeding the usual results obtained by Iraq's Exocet missiles or Iran's ship-launched Seakiller missiles in typical "Tanker War" attacks.

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